

Q&A

with Alexander Vainshtein, RCM



Left to right: Bill Thompson, President, Malvern Condominium Property Management; Stephen Pollishuke, Condo Board Director; Bernard Betel, Board President; Alexander Vainshtein, RCM, Manager of the Year Award Recipient; Eric Lakien, Board Secretary; Sami Hamam, Board Treasurer; Farzad Lahouti, Board Director. Photo: Ferenaz Lalji

ACMO's Manager of the Year Award is presented to a Registered Condominium Manager (RCM) who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment and dedication to professional condominium property management. This year's recipient is Alexander Vainshtein, RCM of Malvern Condominium Property Management.

Q: Congratulations on receiving ACMO's Manager of the Year Award. What does this award mean to you?

A: The award means a lot to me. The award honours not only myself but my company's team, the board of directors and the owners residing in the building I manage, YRCC 798, 7905 Bayview Ave. The award also honours contractors providing services to the building. Being a property manager means to interact with all these people. The award recognizes the efforts of all people involved. I feel that way. If you pull out any link of this chain, it will not be so strong.

The award was totally unexpected. Furthermore, the ACMO Annual Awards of Excellence Luncheon was scheduled on Friday, November 22. That day was my day off. I had to babysit my much-loved grandson Austin. I had to cancel my babysitting job and attend the luncheon to support, as I assumed, my colleagues from Malvern Condominium Property Management. Bill Thompson, President of Malvern, and Lyndsey McNally, our Team Leader, are involved in many volunteer jobs for ACMO, CCI-T and CCI National. These professionals are well-known in the industry. Only after receiving the Award I realized that the team was in attendance to support and

recognize myself. The board members also attended the Luncheon. At the beginning, I did not see them in the crowd.

Q: You were nominated by your board of directors who stated that you "treat the building as if you live there, and your efforts go toward enhancing its value." Why is this attitude important in condominium management?

A: It makes it easier to do my job if I treat the building as if I live there, like my own property. This is like my biggest investment and I treat it with care and diligence. After a notice went out to the building residents announcing my award,



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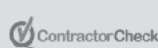
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one resident, an elderly lady, approached me at our Meet and Greet cocktail party, and said that she knows why I got the award. I was carefully listening trying not to miss any word. She said that I do everything with my heart. I concluded to myself that people do recognize when you try as hard as you can to provide the best service.

It was funny when one couple attended the site office to take a selfie with me. I did not expect to be so famous. Nobody requested autographs yet.

My attitude is closer to the old-school professionals. I assume that I will be working in this field until my pension. I am trying to be always available and approachable. The job is not always fun. There is after-hours work, emergencies etc. It is always busy, all year round.

Q: You received your RCM in 2008. What path led you to condominium management and becoming an RCM?

A: I immigrated to Canada in 2000 having wide computer knowledge, programming and networking, also a civil engineering background.

In June 2001, a friend invited me to try a "survival" job in a highrise build-

ing she lived in. This how I became a self-employed property manager without much knowledge of condominiums and how they work. I was hired by the board directly. I dealt with every aspect of this work mostly myself, learning as I go. Some help was provided to me by the president of the board.

After several years of being in the building with more knowledge in the field, I noticed that the board did not care much about what the condo Declaration or bylaws said and what the owners wanted. They also were not prepared to listen to me. The board cared about not increasing the maintenance fees above all. They succeeded not to increase the fees for a decade allowing the building to decline. The owners were unhappy with the building condition. I had to arrange for a police officer to attend our AGMs. I believe in 2003 the Police declined to attend our meetings.

In 2004, I started looking for some courses providing knowledge in property management and enrolled in Humber College Continuing Education courses. Andy Wallace was my law course teacher. I loved his classes.

The same year, after losing any hope with the board which employed me, I decided to leave the building and join a property management company with a good reputation who cared about clients. In early January 2005, I was hired by Malvern who supported my willingness to learn. I continued my education at Humber College and in 2008 received my RCM designation.

Q: You have been with Malvern for 15 years. You often take time to share your knowledge with other managers at Malvern as well as help on-site staff with ongoing education. Why is it important to share and mentor others?

A: I like to share knowledge. I guess it is part of my personality. If a colleague or on-site staff asks a question or require help, this becomes my priority. Knowledge sharing helps others in their professional endeavours.

If you are a part of the workforce for any period of time, you have at least some level of professional expertise that makes you an asset to your organization. Sharing knowledge helps others to learn the job and become more successful.



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Several building managers I used to supervise turned out to be very successful property managers. I enjoyed working with them.

Q: You clearly have great organizational and communication skills that included helping your condominium win 'Condo of the Decade' from CCI-Toronto. What skills are important for a condominium manager to be successful in this new decade of change?

A: The condominium I manage was awarded '2017 Condo of the Year' and '2019 Condo of the Decade'.

Of the must-have property management skills, communication skills take first place. Without strong communication skills, a property manager's job will be cumbersome. It is important to communicate effectively with the board of directors, unit owners, various contractors, the property management team, other professionals and tenants.

Good organization skills will help to deal with several simultaneous tasks, set goals and make sure that all deadlines are met, nothing is missed.

Knowledge of relevant condominium laws is also important. These laws change,

so it is a property manager's responsibility to remain up-to-date on all legal aspects of property management.

Customer service orientation is also one of the key property management skills. Customer service is about handling customers' inquiries.

Property managers should also have a basic level of technical understanding of how buildings work.

Q: What projects are you working on now?

A: Our building is always busy. We are at the planning stage of the swimming pool and party room renovations. I am collecting quotes to replace the booster pumps. Getting ready to install an electric vehicle charging station. This involves infrastructure installation and getting legal agreements ready. These are only a few projects I am working on now.

Q: Do you have any advice for other managers who are either new to condominium management or hoping to advance their careers?

A: My advice to a property manager would be to listen and communicate, be proactive and involved. Be approachable. ■



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